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AUTHOR	Sattler, Joan; Notari, Carol
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ABSTRACT

Reported is a descriptive analysis of observations made in Illinois schools (four school districts) and of responses from 29 special and regular teachers and administrators regarding integration of nonsensory mildly handicapped students. It is said that students formerly in special classes have been integrated in many regular classrooms and that the trend is for only students below the educable level to continue in self contained classrooms. The responses are based on the following interview topics: personal data, child related difficulties with integration; teacher related difficulties with integration, the ideal person to help with integration, the ideal educational program, and university course content. Some of the responses indicate that teachers frequently mentioned characteristics such as aggressiveness or social maladjustment as deterrents to appropriate functioning of special students in regular classrooms, and that teachers used behavioral modification techniques, and were enthusiastic about integration (provided supplementary support such as teacher teaming, and resource rooms continued). Other findings indicate that administrators preferred teachers with regular and special class experience to help with integration, whereas teachers preferred a crisis teacher knowledgeable about children's social-emotional difficulties; that both teachers and administrators liked a nongraded approach; and that administrators desired inclusion of two special education courses in university teacher programs, whereas teachers desired courses in remedial reading, social-emotional problems, and educational programming. (MC)

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RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTEGRATION OF NON-SENSORY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

By

Joan Sattler
Carol Notari

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Department of Special Education

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PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to describe the responses of a sampling of regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, and administrators within the State of Illinois to the issue of integration of mildly handicapped children, previously classified as mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled, into the mainstream of the educational system. The sample includes 29 individuals from four separate areas within Illinois.

Currently, the needs of these non-sensory handicapped children are met in a variety of ways throughout the State of Illinois. Although funds are commonly dispensed to programs on a categorical basis, several school districts are veering from this categorical trend.

Typically, those children classified as trainable or mentally handicapped are placed in traditional self-contained classrooms with integration beginning at the "educable" level in some areas. The children classified as learning disabled and emotionally disturbed are generally assigned to regular classrooms but receive supplementary supportive services through resource rooms, team teaching, or itinerant teachers. Although a few districts maintain classes for learning disabled and emotionally disturbed children, these children appear to be the initial targets for integration. Every special education administrator mentioned that self-contained special classrooms are still appropriate for some children, but that this concept has been misused in the past.

Responses to the practice of integrating special children were generally favorable, and many teachers expressed genuine enthusiasm for it. As would be anticipated, difficulties did arise and were solved through compromise, thorough planning, and determination. One method of

compromise mentioned, is "reverse integration," where "regular" children, who have not been formally tested by the school psychologists, are also provided special services by special education personnel when needed. Where integration seemed most successful, acceptance and enthusiasm permeated the atmosphere--from the administrative level on down. The special education teachers seemed encouraged by the Directors of Special Education to be full participants in the regular educational programs and to be directly responsible to their building principal.

It seems to be the general focus of the administrators interviewed that they feel they must be integral components for change and "create an atmosphere of integration." This is being done in some areas through coordinated administrative teamwork with the regular educational administrators. It was mentioned that much of this teamwork involves community agencies and parents.

This project focused on present and anticipated problems and situations of integrating children previously classified as learning disabled, mentally retarded, or emotionally disturbed into regular classrooms. Special education administrators, regular classroom teachers, and special education teachers were personnally interviewed. The sample included 29 individuals from around the State of Illinois: Springfield, South Cook County, Lake County Special Education Services, and Champaign. This report is a descriptive analysis of observations of the schools visited and comments and responses of the administrators and teachers interviewed.

Our interview topics included:

1. Personal data
    a. School Areas
    b. Grade Level
    c. Socioeconomic level of school children
    d. Degrees held and major field
    e. Course work in Special Education
2. Child-related difficulties with integration: specific behavioral manifestations.
3. Teacher-related difficulties with integration.
4. The role of a special education person trained non-categorically to help with integration.
5. The ideal educational program.
6. Course content
    a. What would you like offered by the University?
    b. What has been most helpful in the past?
    c. What has been least helpful in the past?

Personal Data

The personal data concerning the individuals interviewed are listed on the final page of this report.

Child-Related Difficulties with Integration (Behavioral Characteristics)

"Do you think the children with special needs will have or do have any behavioral characteristics which would make it difficult for them to function adequately in the regular classroom?"

Behavioral characteristics of special children mentioned most frequently, according to our sample, are as follows:

Thirty percent mentioned aggressiveness, which included physically and verbally abusive behaviors.

Thirty percent mentioned hyperactivity and distractibility. This seemed to be a difficulty in the primary and intermediate elementary grades and was seldom mentioned in the middle schools or senior high schools. When we prompted the middle-school teachers on this behavior, they said they found this as one of their least significant behavioral problems.

Thirty percent mentioned social maladjustment, which included lack of respect for authority, and a low-self concept.

Twenty-seven percent mentioned not able to function well in a group; 24 percent mentioned not independent; 17 percent mentioned not self-directing; 17 percent mentioned immaturity. Several teachers added that many of the children who exhibited these behaviors seemed to function better in a more structured environment.

Twenty percent said they could make no statement as to behavioral manifestations specific to special education children. The regular classroom teachers who responded this way mentioned that the special education children

who were integrated in their classrooms exhibited no specific characteristic behaviors that were any different from their "regular" children. The special education teachers who responded this way tended to be involved also with "regular" children in their schools who were having learning difficulties and said they just could not generalize about behaviors. Several teachers, both regular and special, observed that many behavioral problems seem to disappear when a child is integrated into a regular class. Reasons for this may be:

1. The child chosen to be integrated may be the one who has already become self-directing and better adjusted.
2. The special child may be influenced by the good example of the "regular" children.
3. The child may know what types of behaviors are expected in regular classes.
4. The child may withdraw when faced with difficulties.
5. The regular classroom teacher, who is pro-integration, may be an influential factor in the special child's adjustment.

Also noteworthy in the sample interviewed were several teachers who mentioned that many of the "special" children tended to be weak visually. These teachers capitalized on the strong auditory channel by taping lessons and by having the regular children read the lessons to the special children.

Of the total sample, 30 percent was the largest response in any one category. Possible reasons for the dearth of responses from the teachers interviewed are:

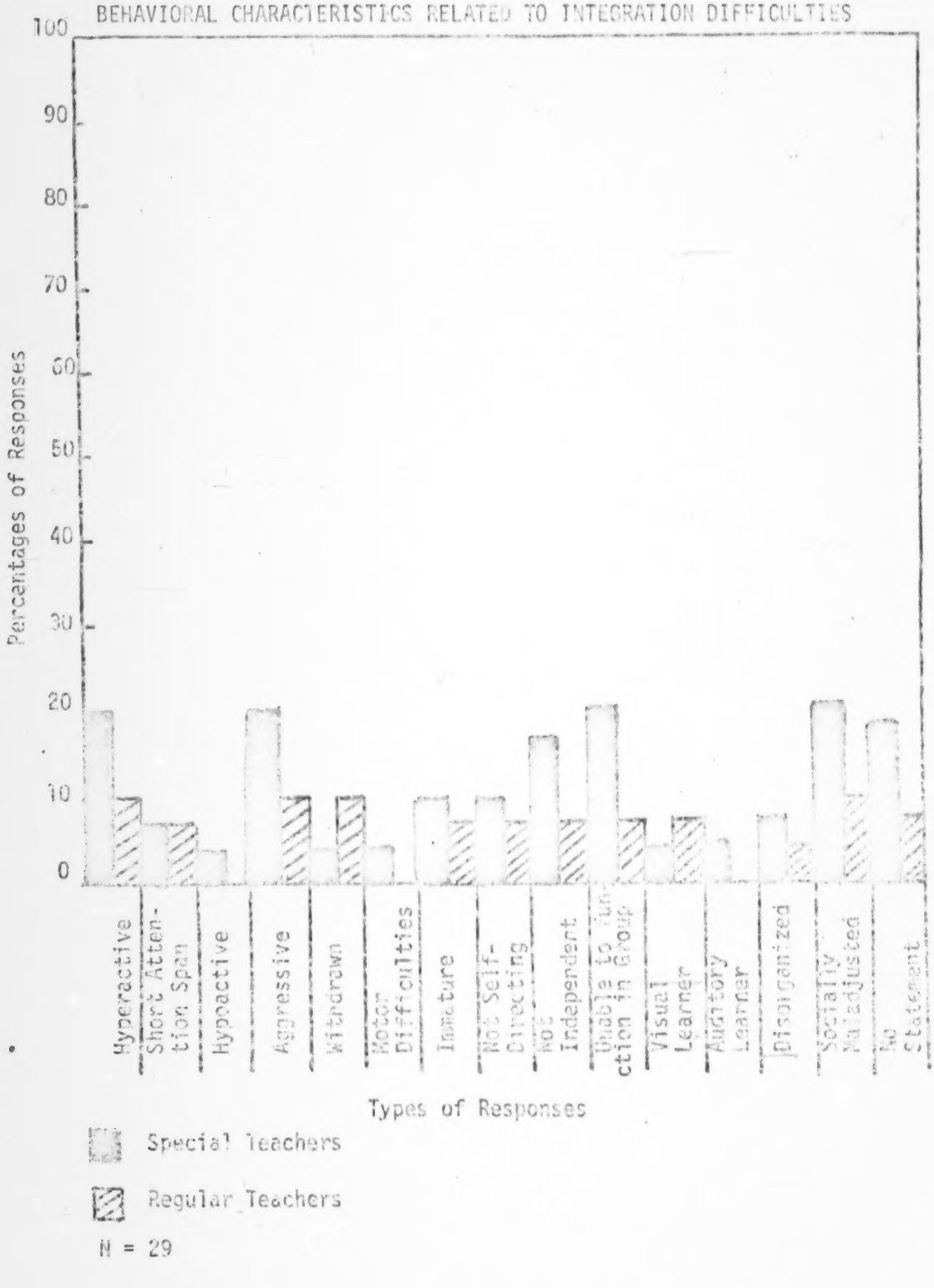
1. This was a carefully selected sample of people already involved in and/or acquainted with integration.
2. These teachers may be more willing to allow for individual differences, are more familiar with learning problems and may be more willing to accept a challenge.
3. They seemed to view children "non-categorically."
4. They may be more involved in considering learning processes than focusing on individual behaviors.
5. One regular teacher suggested that special children stay quiet in regular class in order to not attract attention. This may imply that non-acting out children are first chosen to be integrated. Unless misbehaviors are prominent, the special children are sometimes "easiest to ignore."

A major element running through most of the conversations with the teachers on all grade levels, was the problem of socialization, helping the children deal with their social-emotional difficulties, and helping the children deal more effectively with other people.

Teacher-Related Difficulties

"Are the school curriculum and materials which are available to you, amenable to individualized instruction?"

Responses consistently indicated the necessity of re-designing curriculum and materials to serve individual needs. Supplementary materials, manufactured and home-made, facilitated this process, and the following techniques were utilized by both regular and special teachers.


BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO INTEGRATION DIFFICULTIES
Percentages of Responses
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Hyperactive
Short Attention Span
Hypoactive
Aggressive
Withdrawn
Motor Difficulties
Immature
Poor Self-Directing
Not Independent
Unable to function in group
Visual Learner
Auditory Learner
Disorganized
Socially Maladjusted
No Statement
Types of Responses
Special Teachers
Regular Teachers
N = 29

1. Behavioral objectives.
2. Contract system.
3. Tape recording lessons.
4. Providing alternative choice to child.

In all cases, teachers felt that the curriculum must be organized and structured, but also flexible. They expressed willingness to adjust to individual needs.

"How does scheduling affect the process of integration?"

The general trend appeared to be that the special education teachers "work around" the regular class schedules. Therefore, the special child was fit into the regular class schedule. The regular teacher involved in integration was chosen carefully on the basis of attitude, rapport, and teaching style. In order to establish rapport and a more accepting attitude toward the special child, reverse integration was used in several instances; regular children needing special assistance were sent to the special teacher for specified periods--most popularly language arts.

In only one instance did a special teacher feel that the regular class schedule was a preventative factor to integration.

One intermediate level team, which included the special teacher, mentioned that their approach was so flexible that the schedule could be changed daily if necessary.

"Does the special area teacher play a role in integration?"

One of the most frequently mentioned methods of beginning integration is to include the special children in regular classes in Physical Education, Art, and Music. The non-academic demands of these classes facilitated integration and permitted the special child to compete and often experience success.

In one instance, a teacher of the emotionally disturbed commented that these children are most easily integrated into a structured, academic setting.

It was common, however, that the special education children received the services of the art, music, physical education, remedial reading, and speech specialists, whether they were ~~intended~~ integrated or not.

"Is there a school policy providing conference time for the teachers involved in integration to plan and consult?"

No time is designated specifically for joint planning by the regular and special teachers. Generally, they meet informally after school or during the lunch hour. One middle school schedules one planning period per day and one primary ED teacher has a staffing time each week after school hours.

"How are the parents involved in the educational process?"

In most instances, school policy provided for at least one parent conference per semester concerning the child's school progress. In the sample interviewed, there seemed to be little involvement with parent-teacher organizations or volunteer parent tutors in the schools.

Other methods of communicating with parents were:

1. Daily notes home reporting positive behaviors.
2. Home visits.
3. Parents of ED children meet every two months with child's teacher and counselor for family "therapy" sessions.
4. Written reports.
5. Parent awareness groups - programs of interest, including resource people, films, current problems, were presented to parents by special education teams.

"What burdens are you experiencing (or anticipate) as a result of integration?"

Most of the regular teachers interviewed were enthusiastic about integration and anticipated no additional burdens as long as they (and the children) were provided supportive services.

Teacher "teaming" seemed to be favored by regular and special teachers. In this instance, all children are assigned to regular classrooms and the special education teacher is incorporated as a team member. Her services are then extended to all children who might benefit from her special training and skills.

A few of the problems anticipated by regular class teachers were:

1. Handling behavioral problems.
2. Additional planning time required.
3. Keeping the special child involved in class participation.

Problems anticipated and experienced by special teachers were:

1. Choosing most accepting teacher for the special child.
2. Extra time required to provide more individual support for the integrated child.
3. Lack of cooperation by regular teacher.
4. Maintaining awareness of expectancies of each regular class into which she is integrating children.

Administrators voiced concern over:

1. The child who is bussed into special classes and does not belong to the local school district.
2. Convincing the regular teacher to accept an additional child in her class.

"How many children are involved in integration and how does the special education teacher help?"

Schools which had the greatest number of children integrated were the ones which utilized an open-classroom, or team approach. In these instances, the special education teacher provided services to the total school through reverse integration, teaching in the regular classes, tutoring, or resource rooms. Mentioned in one school was an interesting twist: "regular" children are now referring themselves for special services.

In the more traditional schools with mostly self-contained classrooms, the number of children being integrated was much less significant.

Several methods of integration being utilized were:

1. Regular class placement one-half day (popularly afternoons).
2. Into regular class for one or more specific subjects.
3. Informally and by scheduling time blocks in resource room.
4. Into special education class for specific subjects.

In the four areas visited, approximately 175 children are involved in one form of integration or another. This number, of course, is just from the sample of teachers interviewed.

Role of the Specialist

"If there were a special person to help you with integration difficulties, what would you like--and what would be their role?" (A person trained non-categorically in special education with knowledge of MR, ED, and LD problems)

Administrators' views as to the role of this person.

1. It was mentioned that it would be desirable if this person had teaching experience in the regular and special classroom.
2. One who had communication skills in dealing with all teachers and school personnel.

3. One who would be a "reference person" for materials, plans, and programs.

4. Perhaps one of these people per school to coordinate services for children with special needs. This was mentioned by one director of special education and two supervisors.

5. One who could work directly with children and teachers--observing, teaching, and demonstrating in the classroom.

6. One who could provide in-service training for teachers and paraprofessionals.

7. One who could help teachers write child prescriptions through formal and informal methods of evaluation of the children.

Special education teachers' views as to the role of this person:

1. Crisis teacher to deal with social-emotional difficulties of the children.

2. One who could effectively work in a teacher team to provide services.

3. One who had knowledge of classroom management to help regular teachers deal with this.

4. One who could help teachers write behavioral objectives and design programs for individual children.

5. One who was hired to service regular teachers, as well as special teachers.

6. Resource person for curriculum, materials, informal, and formal testing methods.

7. One who has teaching experience. One teacher mentioned that she felt it was important that this person also have regular classroom teaching experience.

8. One who could coordinate counselors, social workers, agencies, and parent involvement to better serve the child.

Regular teachers' views as to the role of this specially trained person:

1. Resource person for curriculum and materials to plan appropriate programs for individual children and make suggestions for remediation.

2. One who could work with children at all levels in a particular school and handle behavioral problems.

3. One who could observe, demonstrate, and do informal testing.

Ideal Educational Program

"Ideally, what type of educational program would you set up so that students of all abilities and disabilities, as well as teachers, would have the optimum benefit?"

Administrators' responses:

1. Non-graded team approach to school organization.

2. Four out of five mentioned that there is a need for self-contained special classrooms for some children, but that this has been misused in the past.

3. Strong emphasis on preventative programs of early diagnosis and intervention.

4. Perhaps match children's needs to teacher style and philosophy.

5. Keep special child in regular school mainstream, if possible.

6. Organize and present meaningful in-service programs for regular and special teachers and paraprofessionals.

7. Special education director as part of the administrative team which helps set all-district policies.

Special teachers' responses:

1. Non-graded and individualized approach.

2. Do away with labels for children and classrooms.

3. Special teachers team with regular teachers.

4. Preventative programs at early years.

5. Therapy groups which would include children, teacher, and social worker or mental health agent. This was actually being done in one school system and the teachers were very enthusiastic.

6. Systematic approach for attitude change.

7. Hierarchy of behavioral and social skills should be taught all children.

8. Multi-age groupings.

9. Emphasized peer tutoring.

10. Teach according to child's interest.

Regular teachers' responses:

1. Non-graded individualized approach.

2. Teacher teaming.

3. Concern with child's needs not just subject matter.

4. More in-service training--especially on individualized instruction.

5. Early diagnosis and prevention programs.

6. Contract system.

7. Learning centers, which would include itinerant and resource personnel.

Course Content

"What course content would you like offered by the University?"

Administrators' responses:

1. Require at least two special education courses of all teachers in teacher training programs.

2. More practical experience and starting before senior year.

3. For the special education teacher, non-categorical course work in special education.

4. More program consistency for teacher requirements.

5. More course work on behavioral disorders--social-emotional.

Special education teachers' responses:

1. More course work in learning disabilities.

2. More interning.

3. Content on diagnosis and remediation.

4. Behavioral management.

5. Content on open classroom approaches.

6. Learning theory.

7. Human relations.

8. More emphasis on vocational education for junior-senior high teachers.

9. More content on curriculum.

Regular teachers' responses:

1. Remedial reading.

2. Course dealing with social-emotional problems.

3. Individualized instruction and programming.

4. More interviewing.

5. Testing-diagnosis.

6. All elementary teachers should be required to take special education courses.

7. Teacher effectiveness training.

8. Professional-political activities of teachers.

9. Behavioral objectives course work.

"What course content has been most helpful to you?"

Administrators' responses:

1. Child development course work.

2. Behavior modification content.

3. Diagnosis and remedial techniques.

4. Practical experience was overwhelmingly emphasized.

Special education teachers' responses:

1. Practicum

2. Case studies and tutoring.

3. Audio-visual course.

4. Behavioral modification and class management.

5. Diagnosis and remediation.

6. Pre-school course.

7. Guidance and counseling.
8. Social-emotional course work.
9. Remedial reading.

Regular teachers' responses:

1. Practicum.
2. Behavior modification.
3. Children's literature.
4. Psychology course work
5. Instructional materials.
6. Child development.
7. In-service workshops.

"What course content has been least helpful to you?"

Special teachers' responses:

1. Too many elementary methods courses.
2. All lecture classes.
3. General education and educational philosophy courses.
4. Should de-emphasize characteristics of special education.

Regular teachers' responses:

1. Too many elementary methods.
2. History and Philosophy of education.

SAMPLE DATA

Districts:

Champaign Unit 4
Springfield District
Lake County SPEED District
South Cook County SPEED District

Population:

Administrators	5	Regular Teachers	11	Special Teachers	13
Directors	3	Elementary	6	Elementary	9
Supervisors	2	Jr. H.S.	5	Jr. H.S.	3
		Sr. H.S.	0	Sr. H.S.	1

Socioeconomic Level of Students:

Low-Middle Class through Upper-Middle Class

Professional Training of Teachers:

Regular Teachers

Bachelor's Degree	10
Master's Degree	1

Special Teachers

Bachelor's Degree	7
Master's Degree	4
Post-Master's	2

Course Work in Special Education

Behavior Modification	1
Counseling & Guidance	1
Gifted	1

Areas of Concentration

Bachelor's: EMH-TMH
Psychology
Elementary Education
Emotional Disturbance
Physically Handicapped
Visually Handicapped
Speech

Master's: Psychology
Learning Disabilities
Emotional Disturbance
Non-Categorical